Chapter 11 Summary

Food, Land & Sea

As Devon is a county with two coastlines and a significant amount of farmland, it is crucial to consider food production, land use and the coast when addressing the climate emergency. The mix of emissions in this area is also distinct, as the main greenhouse gases are methane (from the digestion of food by livestock) and nitrous oxide (from manure and fertiliser) rather than carbon dioxide. These emissions accounted for 17% of Devon's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2019. A further 4% arises from machinery.

Three Main Changes Are Needed To Reduce Emissions In This Area:

Develop Demand For Nutritious And Sustainably-Produced Food.

We need to use our spending power to support local farmers, fisheries and horticulture that demonstrate best practice, and eat less red meat and dairy.

Reduce GHG Emissions And Improve Carbon Storage From Farming.

Practices that enhance soil carbon should be adopted, including regenerative practices, agroforestry and pasture-based livestock farming. Farm machinery should use renewable fuels, and emissions from manures, wastes and fertilisers must be reduced.

Maximise Carbon Storage In The Environment.

We need to protect and enhance existing habitats and ecosystems, and create new ones, which store carbon. This could include planting trees, restoring upland peatlands, and focusing on other habitats in Devon such as hedges; wetland habitats such as reedbeds and valley mires; wet Culm grasslands; soils; salt marshes and mudflats; and sea grass meadows and kelp beds.

By making these changes and enhancing the environment, we will help to address the ecological crisis, minimise flood risk, improve water quality, and encourage eco-tourism by contributing to Devon's beauty and appeal. On an individual level, eating nutritious and sustainably-produced food will improve health and wellbeing, as will having greater contact with nature.

Actions:

Everyone:

- Aim to have a diet that follows the government's Eatwell Guide, which requires us to eat less red meat and dairy
- Where possible, choose to eat food that is sourced locally and sustainably-produced
- Be mindful of your impact on the environment, and treat it with care when out and about, following the Countryside Code

Actions:

Communities:

- Set up a local farmers market or community shop
- Offer cooking skill share sessions to reconnect people with local seasonal food
- Help people to eat a sustainable balanced diet at your events
- Take action to protect and enhance local habitats and wildlife - get inspired with Wild About Devon

Actions:

Organisations:

- Consider buying local through the South West Food Hub
- Provide meals in your eateries aligned to the government's Eatwell Guide
- Incentivise sustainable food-practices through procurement procedures

Actions:

Local Policy Makers:

- Support the Devon Food Partnership
- Work with government to support new initiatives, including a food labelling system showing environmental impact, and preferential trade tariffs to food products that demonstrate minimum food standards
- Work with government to design an effective Environmental Land Management Scheme that will ensure food production alongside carbon storage and other public goods
- Look to set-up a Devon Farm Advice Service
- Support the testing and adoption of low-carbon agricultural practices, and explore how this could be demonstrated on the County farms estate
- Develop and implement a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a Nature Recovery Network, and a Trees for Devon initiative
- Develop a Land Use Framework
- Develop an online investment platform to provide a match-making service between providers of environmental services and people wishing to purchase them
- Work with government to introduce more marine protected areas, and to improve the effectiveness of environmental legislation overall
- Develop and implement a South Devon Marine Natural Capital Plan, including piloting projects increasing carbon sequestration and support for smaller sustainable fisheries
- Support the development of carbon storage accreditation schemes for a range of carbon-rich terrestrial, coastal and marine habitats
- Allocate land for horticulture near settlements in development plans where suitable